

HA-1468

1897

Norris House - St. Margaret's
School and Convent
31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue
Bel Air
demolished

This large "Scotch Cottage" that Jacob Bull designed was built in 1897 for the Norris Brothers, John W. Stump Norris and Octavius J. Norris. In 1911 the house became the School and Convent for St. Margaret's. More recently it was divided into apartments.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

HA-1468
1314686604

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Norris House - St. Margaret's School & Convent

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue

1st

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Harford

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

___DISTRICT

☒BUILDING(S)

___STRUCTURE

___SITE

___OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

___PUBLIC

☒PRIVATE

___BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___IN PROCESS

___BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

___OCCUPIED

☒UNOCCUPIED

___WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

___YES: RESTRICTED

___YES: UNRESTRICTED

☒NO

PRESENT USE

___AGRICULTURE

___COMMERCIAL

___EDUCATIONAL

___ENTERTAINMENT

___GOVERNMENT

___INDUSTRIAL

___MILITARY

___MUSEUM

___PARK

___PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___RELIGIOUS

___SCIENTIFIC

___TRANSPORTATION

☒OTHER: Vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

David Cohen

Telephone #: 838-2828

STREET & NUMBER

9 S. Main

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21014

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Harford County Courthouse

Liber #: 366

Folio #: 367

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___FEDERAL ___STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

HA-1468

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☒ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This large two bay two and a half story house is at 31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. It faces the corner of Pennsylvania and Hickory, thus sitting at an angle on its large wooded lot. It is composed of a two bay by two bay main block with a jerkinhead gable roof, a back building with a jerkinhead roof at right angles to that of the main block, and a 2 story shed roofed addition behind that. A single story addition runs beside the shed roofed one. It has a vaguely hipped roof and is probably an enclosed porch.

The building is shiplap sided on the first floor and wood shingled on the second floor. Shed roofed dormers with paired 1/1 windows break the roof line in front (NE). The second story windows are 2/1. In front in the first story they are 2 long over 2 horizontal. Rotting shutters frame the windows.

A hipped roof porch with a projecting center portion is carried on chamfered posts. A row of spindles runs just under the eaves. The balusters are turned, and there are decorative brackets. The porch itself is unsafe.

This once magnificent house has been apartments for many years. It has reached the bottom of its long slide into degradation. The interior was unavailable for inspection because it is deemed unsafe by the owner. The building is scheduled to be demolished shortly.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1897 ~~BUILDER~~/ARCHITECT Jacob Bull

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This large "Scotch cottage" was built in 1897 by Jacob Bull, Bel Air's Master Builder, for John W. Stump Norris and Octavius J. Norris. The Norris Brothers bought the land that year from Charles L. Dallam (91/191). The house is large and ornate for Bel Air, even though it was built to be the home of the two bachelor brothers.

In 1911 Octavius Norris sold the property to James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore (132/338). Although the General Assembly of the State of Maryland was required by the State Constitution to ratify the sale (to a foreign Prince?) it neglected to do so in the 18 years the house was used as St. Margaret's Convent and School.

In June 1928 Bishop Michael J. Curley sold the property to Simon Getz for \$8000 (208/421). In July, Cassandra Lee, the residuary legatee of Octavius Norris, executed a confirmatory deed, too (208/421). Getz sold it in August 1928 to C. Greek Irwin (208/422). In 1933 Irwin sold it to James Wheeler (227/289). When Wheeler sold it to the present owner, David Cohen (366/367,1951) it was known as the Wheeler Apartments. It has been apartments ever since, degenerating rapidly.

It is closed and vacant, due to be demolished the week of October 1, 1979.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCESHarford Democrat

Interview with Miss Hazel Esley, 26 September 1979

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies parcel #871 in the Town of Bel Air, 150' x 200'

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian

27 September 1979

ORGANIZATION

Town of Bel Air

DATE

838-8700

STREET & NUMBER

39 Hickory Avenue

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

TITLE: 31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue

366/367

1 December 1951
James A. Wheeler & Melissa
to
David Cohen & Hanna
the property now known as the Wheeler Apts.
Lillian Wheeler died; James married & divorced
Miriam, then married Melissa.

227/289

27 October 1933
C. Greek Irwin & Della May
to
James A. Wheeler & Lillian
the Wheelers to assume \$4000 mortgage (212/122)

208/422

7 August 1928
Simon Getz & Kate
to
C. Greek Irwin & Della May

208/421

1 June 1928
Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore
to
Simon Getz & Kate
\$8000

208/421

24 July 1928
S. Cassandra Lee
to
Simon Getz & Kate
1. Octavius J. Norris conveyed the property to
James Cardinal Gibbons (21 Feb 1911,
132/338) but the State of Maryland, required
by the State Constitution to ratify, neglected to
do so.
2. Octavius Norris died, 12 October 1923, and
left Cassandra Lee as residuary legatee. She
gives confirmatory deed.

91/191

25 May 1897

Charles L. Dallam & Isabel & Frank H. Jacobs
to

John W. Stump Norris & Octavius J. Norris

Jacobs releases the property from a mortgage
(1890, 87/30).

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST 21 STATE CIRCLE SHAW HOUSE ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401 HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET Individual Structure Survey Form		SURVEY NUMBER: HA-1468 NEGATIVE FILE NUMBER: UTM REFERENCES: Zone/Easting/Northing U.S.G.S. QUAD. MAP: PRESENT FORMAL NAME: Cohen Apartments	
COUNTY: Harford TOWN: Bel Air		ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME: Norris House - St. Margaret's school & convent	
LOCATION: 31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue		PRESENT USE: to be demolished ORIGINAL USE: private residence	
COMMON NAME: House		ARCHITECT/ENGINEER: Jacob Bull	
FUNCTIONAL TYPE: private residence		BUILDER/CONTRACTOR:	
OWNER: David Cohen ADDRESS: 9 S. Main Bel Air		PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE: Excellent() Good() Fair() Poor(X)	
ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Yes() No(X) Restricted()		THEME: Architecture STYLE: Vernacular	
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local(X) State() National()		DATE BUILT: 1897	
GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Structural System 1. Foundation: Stone(X) Brick() Concrete() Concrete Block() 2. Wall Structure A. Wood Frame: Post and Beam() Balloon() B. Wood Bearing Masonry: Brick() Stone() Concrete() Concrete Block() C. Iron() D. Steel() E. 1st Other: 3. Wall Covering: Clapboard(X) Board and Batten() Wood Shingle(X) Shiplap() Novelty() Stucco() Sheet Metal() Aluminum() Asphalt Shingle() Brick Veneer() Stone Veneer() Bonding Pattern: Other: 4. Roof Structure A. Truss: Wood() Iron() Steel() Concrete() B. Other: 5. Roof Covering: Slate() Wood Shingle() Asphalt Shingle(X) Sheet Metal() Built Up() Rolled() Tile() Other: 6. Engineering Structure: 7. Other: Appendages: Porches(X) Towers() Cupolas() Dormers(X) Chimneys(X) Sheds() Ells() Wings() Other: with Roof Style: Gable(X) Hip() Shed() Flat() Mansard() Gambrel() Jerkinhead(X) Saw Tooth() With Monitor() With Bellcast() With Parapet() With False Front() Other: Number of Stories: 2½ Number of Bays: 2 Approximate Dimensions: 40' x 75' inc. porch Entrance Location: Hickory Avenue			
THREAT TO STRUCTURE: No Threat() Zoning() Roads() Development() Deterioration() Alteration() Other: to be demolished		LOCAL ATTITUDES: Positive() Negative() Mixed() Other:	

ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

porch chamfered posts, turned balusters, small
 roof shed with spindles over & decorative bracket
 window 1st floor 2 long over 2 horizontal 2nd 2/1
 shed roof dormers w paired 1/1 windows

RELATED STRUCTURES: (Describe)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

s Jacob Bull house - called a "Scotch cottage" in
 the Harford Democrat, 18 June 1897
 St. Margaret's School & Convent 1911-1928

REFERENCES:

MAP: (Indicate North in Circle)



SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

Open Lane() Woodland() Scattered Buildings()
 Moderately Built Up() Densely Built Up()
 Residential() Commercial()
 Agricultural() Industrial()
 Roadside Strip Development()
 Other:

Marilynn Larew

RECORDED BY:

Town of Bel Air

ORGANIZATION:

26 September 1979

DATE RECORDED:









